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Service Commission, September 8, 1983; and Texas Public Service Commission, September 19, 1983, for Southwestern Bell Company.

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Testimony before the State of Connecticut Department of Public Utility Control on methods of regulating rates for basic television cable service, March 9, 1982.

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(Rev. 5/99)

CRANDALL DECLARATION

RECEIVED

Before the Federal Communications Commission Washington, DC 20554

MAY 2 6 1999

PEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

In the Matter of)	OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Implementation of the Local Competition)	CC Docket No. 96-98
Provisions in the Telecommunications Act)	
of 1996)	

Declaration of Robert W. Crandall

Qualifications

1. I am a Senior Fellow in Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC, a position that I have held since 1978. Prior to that I was Acting Director, Deputy Director, and Assistant Director of the Council on Wage and Price Stability in the Executive Office of the President, and in 1974-75 I was an adviser to Commissioner Glen Robinson of the Federal Communications Commission. I was an Assistant Professor and Associate Professor of Economics at MIT between 1966 and 1974. I have written widely on telecommunications policy, the economics of broadcasting, and the economics of cable television. I am author or co-author of four books on communications policy published by the Brookings Institution since 1989: Changing the Rules: Technological Change, International Competition, and Regulation in Communications (with Kenneth Flamm), 1989; After the Breakup: U.S. Telecommunications in a more Competitive Era, 1991; Talk is Cheap: The Promise of Regulatory Reform in North

¹The views expressed herein are solely my own and should not be taken to represent the views of the Brookings Institution, its other staff members, or its Trustees.

American Telecommunications (with Leonard Waverman), 1996; and Cable TV: Regulation or Competition? (with Harold Furchtgott-Roth), 1996. A new book on universal-service policy, coauthored with Leonard Waverman, will be published by Brookings at the end of this year. A copy of my curriculum vitae is attached.

2. I have been asked by Bell Atlantic to provide an analysis of the extent to which competitors should have access to the incumbent carriers' network elements. In so doing, I draw upon general economic principles as well as recent developments in technology and market entry in local wireline and wireless services. In addition, I refer briefly to the favorable experiences of market liberalization and deregulation in other industries -- industries in which entry was not guided by extensive cost-based wholesale regulation of access to incumbents' facilities.

Summary of Conclusions

- 3. The Commission should be particularly concerned that its unbundling rules not discourage investment in new network facilities because facilities-based competition is likely to be the most intense and long-lasting form of competition. Unbundling of individual network elements or combinations of those elements should only be required if the Commission has evidence that entrants cannot build their own facilities or cannot obtain them from other sources.
- 4. The pace of technological change in electronics and communications is incredibly rapid. It is important, therefore, that the Commission's unbundling rules take a balanced

approach that encourages new entrants and incumbents to adopt these new technologies through investments in new innovative networks that allow them to develop new product offerings.

Extensive unbundling of existing circuit-switched networks is likely to dissuade entrants from adopting these new technologies and to discourage incumbent local-exchange companies

(ILECs) from engaging in similar innovation in their own networks.

- 5. The Commission has now had three years since the passage of the Telecommunications Act to observe entry decisions by scores of competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs) who are building their own facilities. The Commission should also examine the rapid development of competition in wireless markets in which billions of dollars are being invested in new capital facilities by entrants with little reliance on incumbents' facilities. These companies' investment decisions clearly reveal the degree to which they can build their own facilities, thereby rendering many or all of the ILECs' facilities unnecessary for successful entry. As such entry proceeds, it becomes impossible to conclude that lack of access to ILEC facilities at regulated TELRIC rates will impair the development of competition.
- 6. The availability of non-ILEC elements is increasing over time, particularly in areas of substantial population density. Therefore, unbundling requirements should be reduced over time as new sources of network functionality appear and should be substantially less extensive in the more dense, urban areas.

Introduction

- 7. We are now nearly 40 months past the enactment of the 1996 Act which opened local markets to competition. When the Commission first developed its rules requiring ILEC unbundling, it had only limited evidence on the ability of the CLECs -- the pre-1996 Competitive Access Providers (CAPs) -- to build their own facilities. Nor could the Commission predict how technology would develop in local wireline and wireless markets as these markets were opened to entry. Since the Commission first promulgated its original interconnection rules in August 1996, however, the U.S. telecommunications sector has changed considerably. CLECs, such as Nextlink, ICG, Winstar, Teligent, and e.spire, have invested billions of dollars in their own facilities. Wireless companies have likewise invested billions of dollars in building out PCS and other systems. MCI-WorldCom is the result of numerous large mergers, including WorldCom's acquisition of MFS, Brooks Fiber, and MCI. AT&T -- the largest interexchange carrier -- has experimented with resale and fixed wireless as vehicles for entering the local telecom market, and has purchased Teleport -- one of the largest and oldest CLECs -- and IBM's backbone network. In addition, AT&T has paid \$40 billion to acquire the nation's largest cable television company, TCI, and has offered to acquire Media One for \$54 billion. Moreover, AT&T is now poised to spend billions of dollars to upgrade these acquired cable television facilities in order to provide its subscribers with two-way telecommunications services, including high-speed Internet access, through a network that is closed to other service providers.
 - 8. Internet usage has grown so rapidly that data traffic is now greater than voice traffic in

the nation's telecommunications network. As a result, carriers are rushing to develop low-cost, high-speed Internet connections to bundle with other communications services. Cable television companies (including AT&T's new cable operations) CLECS, ILECs, and satellite companies are developing alternative high-speed connections to offer dispersed subscribers as separate, independent services or as part of a bundle of communications services.

The Role of Unbundled Elements in Promoting Local Market Entry

9. The 1996 Act requires ILECs to unbundle their network facilities so as to accelerate the pace of entry into local telecommunications markets. But such unbundling is limited to those elements that are "necessary", or without which likely entrants would be "impaired" in their efforts to begin to offer local service.² From an economic standpoint, these requirements are satisfied only when there are no good substitutes for the incumbents' facilities — either in the form of other firms' facilities or through the entrant's own investment in facilities that are constructed to provide local access/exchange service. If other CLECs are building networks with comparable functionality or if the entrant could build facilities that are similar to the ILEC facilities, competition could not possibly be impaired by a prospective entrant's inability to use an ILEC's particular functionality in the form of an unbundled network element (UNE).

10. It may be possible that in some situations an entrant's duplication of certain ILEC facilities is uneconomic because such duplication could lead to the suboptimal use of parallel

² Telecommunications Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (1996 Act).

facilities.³ Access to these "essential" facilities -- long part of the antitrust case law -- then becomes necessary for efficient resource use and perhaps for viable entry. However, a facility that was "essential" for yesterday's telephone service may not be today's or tomorrow's ideal facility for delivering tomorrow's telecommunications services, given changing technology and the evolution of new services. If new entrants are discouraged by excessive regulatory intervention from developing their own facilities, regulators cannot be sure that any given facility is truly necessary or essential. Given the rapid pace of technological change in telecommunications, the definition of a "necessary" or "essential" element for new entrants will therefore change over time. As a result, unbundling rules should be defined for only a fixed period of time. Once new technologies or other facilities become available to provide a given function, unbundling of that network functionality should no longer be required.

The Dangers of Excessive Reliance Upon UNEs

11. To my knowledge, there have been very few examples from other industries in which existing firms were required to share their <u>facilities</u> with aspiring entrants. Decrees in antitrust cases occasionally require a divestiture of assets to competitors, but rarely a <u>sharing</u> of them. The essential facilities doctrine may require a company to allow its rivals to use a bridge or a right of way, but not large parts of its entire operations. Nor has there been any substantial experience

³ This doctrine developed out of cases involving "bottlenecks" such as railroad bridges that would be difficult for competitors to replicate. See <u>U.S. v. Terminal Railroad Association</u>, 224 U.S. 383.

with such sharing of network components in the telecom sectors in other countries.⁴ Thus, the Commission is in unchartered waters in attempting to promote competition through widespread unbundling. In doing so, it must take into account the effects of unbundling on investment and innovation in the telecommunications sector by both entrants and incumbents.

- 12. First, allowing firms to lease unbundled elements at regulated prices based on forward-looking costs creates a substantial disincentive for entrants to place their capital at risk by building their own facilities. Why would an entrant invest millions or even billions of dollars in sunk costs if it could simply lease them from incumbents at TELRIC rates? It would do so only if it desired a different network design or technology, but in such a case the entrant would not be impaired by being unable to obtain access to unbundled ILEC facilities.
- 13. Second, as long as the incumbent knows that it must lease its facilities at forward-looking economic cost, its incentive to invest in network upgrades or expansions is severely attenuated. Indeed, AT&T's Chairman, Michael Armstrong, has vigorously argued that forcing AT&T to unbundle would reduce its incentive to invest in upgrading its cable systems:

If these companies [ISPs] want to get into broadband, terrific. But getting a free ride on someone else's investment and risk is not the way to do it.

⁴ Other countries, such as members of the European Union, are beginning to implement unbundling requirements. Thus far, however, the United Kingdom, the first European country to liberalize its telecommunications sector, has not required its incumbent (British Telecom) to unbundle its network. Nevertheless, the UK entrants (primarily cable companies) have been able to build their own facilities and enroll more than 20 percent of homes as telephone subscribers.

It's not fair. It's not right. Worse it would inhibit industry growth and competition. No company will invest billions of dollars to become a facilities-based broadband services provider if competitors who have not invested a penny of capital or taken an ounce of risk can come along and get a free ride on the investments and risks of others.

That would be a major disincentive to the kind of risk-taking that goes with infrastructure investments. And discouraging investment would have a chilling effect on competition. Not just competition in advanced services, but local phone competition as well.⁵

The Commission recognized these disincentive effects from cost-based <u>retail</u> rate regulation in 1989-90 when it substituted price caps for cost-based regulation of AT&T and local exchange carriers.⁶ It should acknowledge now that any unbundling regime in which rivals may lease network elements, or combinations of network elements including the entire UNE platform, at regulated, cost-based prices produces similar disincentive effects and limit the scope of unbundling accordingly.

14. Finally, far too little attention has been paid to the adverse incentives created by ILEC lessors and CLEC lessees sharing the same network to deliver telecom services. Both the networks and the services offered by incumbents and entrants are subject to substantial change over time. Any decision by an ILEC to modify its network to provide new or better services or to deliver them more efficiently is likely to have an impact on the CLECs leasing pieces of its

⁵ C. Michael Armstrong, Chairman and CEO, AT&T, "Telecom and Cable TV: Shared Prospects for the Communications Future," Address delivered to the Washington Metropolitan Cable Club, Washington, DC, November 2, 1998.

⁶ Policy and Rules Concerning Rates for Dominant Carriers, <u>Report and Order and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking</u>, 4 FCC Rec. 2873 (1989).

network. These CLECs will surely have every incentive to complain to regulators that network changes are designed to disadvantage them (the CLECs) and thereby to block or delay their rivals' attempts to develop more attractive services. If every innovation in network design must first be scrutinized by rival CLECs who are lessees of network elements, surely the pace of innovation will slow substantially. For instance, ILECs might be forced to delay the substitution of fiber for copper or the substitution of packet switching for circuit switching technologies by CLEC complaints that they are disdavantaged by such technical progress. Regulators in rivalrous markets are always at risk of being used by market participants to frustrate competition.

Widespread unbundling -- i.e., network sharing -- simply multiplies these opportunities many times over. The more extensive are the unbundling requirements, the greater are the opportunities for conflict and opportunistic use of the regulatory process.

All Networks Are Not the Same

15. Entry into the local telecommunications market can occur with a variety of network designs. Much of the functionality of the current ILECs' networks can be delivered by different facilities. For instance, coaxial cable, fixed wireless, mobile wireless, MMDS, or satellite circuits may each be used as substitutes for the copper loop. Packet switches, Class 4 (IXC) switches, or wireless switches may be used to switch local traffic. Inter-office transport can be provided by a variety of wireless services or fiber-optic lines. As entrants build their networks, they are finding that they are not impaired in delivering services without the use of ILEC network elements.